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## Three Brief Dated Inscriptions

Oskar von HINÜBER (Freiburg)

The three brief inscriptions of unknown provenance were brought to my attention by the kindness of Mr. I. Kurita, who generously gave permission to publish the photos in his possession.

The reading of all three inscriptions is doubtful in many respects. First of all their purpose is anything but clear. However if interpreted correctly inscription no. 1 seems to indicate that at least this one is a label marking the property of the person named in the texts.

Inscription no. 1 (figure 1); measurement about 32 cm by 18 cm:

1. # sa(m)va 907 śake kārttikamā
2. se atra dine silimānagrāme
3. srī prīyamva-satka-traṃmamṅṛ
4. to likhyate

The unusual “om-sign” at the beginning looks like a small flag<sup>1</sup>. On the photo the beginning of the inscription is blurred by a reflection of the flash on the polished surface of the stone. However, *sa(m)va* is certain, but unfortunately the figure is not. The “7” is clearly recognizable at the end of what seems to be a three digit numeral, most likely preceded by a dot signifying “0.” The first figure seems to be “9,” certainly not “8” or “7.” The second akṣara of the word following the figure is certainly *ke*, preceded by what looks like a *śa*, a reading supported by the akṣara *ke*, which in any case does not seem to leave much room for any other word than *śake*. A word of caution is necessary. Here, we seem to see the true akṣara *śa*, while otherwise, e.g. in the word *śrī*, the characters *śa* and *sa* are not distinguished and *sa* replaces *śa* in all three inscriptions. If *śake* is correct, the palaeography would allow only for a year 707 = 785, 807 = 985 or 907 = 985. However, as the figures “7” and “8” are ruled out, the year “907” is left as the only choice.

In spite of the slightly odd akṣara marking *ṛta* it seems, the reading of the month *kārttika* is safe. And so is *atra dine* “on that day.” Strangely, the day is not indicated by a figure.

The text continues by a place-name “in the village Silimāna” of unknown location<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. Roth: Maṅgala-Symbols in Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts and Inscriptions, in: *Devadharma. Studies in Memory of D. C. Sircar*. Delhi 1986, p. 239-149; L. Sander: Om or siddham — Remarks on Openings of Buddhist Manuscripts and Inscriptions from Gilgit and Central Asia, *ibidem*, p. 251-261.

<sup>2</sup> Place names of similar structure such as Sili-gām, Śili-pur or Śili-kākōṭṭa are known from ancient and modern Kashmir, cf. M. A. Stein: *Kaṭhaṇa's Rājatarāṅgiṇī. A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir*. 1900, repr. Delhi 1979, Vol. II index s.vv.

An important clue to the meaning of the inscription is given by the word *satka* “property of” frequently used in inscriptions<sup>3</sup>, e.g.:

*brahmaṇa-satka-dhika*, EI 13. 1915/16, p. 210, line 7 (Cahamāna A.D. 1165)

*śrīnāgeśvara-satka-pimpari-kṣetra*, EI 38, 1969/70, p. 157, line 93 = V. V. Mirashi: Inscriptions of the Śilāhāras. Delhi 1977 (CII VI), p. 90 (A.D. 1049)

*brāhmaṇa-Hastadeva-satka-kṣetram*, Njammasch, as note 3, (Maitraka, A.D. 642)

The word *satka* is preceded by the name *śrī* (written *sri*) *Prīyaṃva* (for *Priyaṃvada*?), and followed by what is owned by *Priyaṃva(da)*, a *trammaṃkṛto*, or less likely °*kyato*, whatever that might be. The reading is fairly certain. Thus it could be either a name of a place, a field for instance, or a word of unknown origin and meaning comparable as such to *legutra* met with in the Danyor inscription. The reference of *likhyate* “is written” remains uncertain. At the end there is an ornamental stroke filling the empty space.

“# In the year 907 (= A.D. 985) Śaka, in the month Kārtika, on that day. The *Trammaṃkṛto*, property of Śrī *Priyaṃva(da)*, is written.”

This inscription could be part a mark delimitating a boundary, if cut off from a larger stone or being part, e.g., of a wall originally. If this is true the word “is written” could refer to a land grant, in which the boundary marked by this inscription is defined. Boundary stones in combination with land grants on copper plates are known from much later times<sup>4</sup>. Inscribed stones are however mentioned already in the commentaries to the Theravāda canon<sup>5</sup>. The oldest surviving inscribed boundary stone seems to be the Bhumara Stone Pillar erected also in the month Kārtika of the Gupta year 189 (A.D. 508/9)<sup>6</sup>.

The next inscription also contains a place name: Inscription no. 2 (figure 2); measurement 30 cm by 30 cm.

1. svasti 17 sa(ṃ)vatsa
2. la srī pro(ṃ)jhvarājyadeva
3. rājye bhogasya putra rājikena
4. sabhaḍikaṇā ghikadhāghike
5. ṇa tātha h(ā)ryama(kha)kena vramhṃma

The second figure is most likely “7.” The position of the word *saṃvatsala* written for *saṃvatsara* following the number is unusual. The exchange of -*ra*- and -*la*- can be observed in the name *sūloṭa* besides *sūroṭa* in Hodar 56:1 or in Dardarbatī Das 70:6<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The word is discussed by F. Kielhorn: Siyadoni Stone Inscription. *EI* 1. 1892, p. 164. This reference is overlooked in M. Njammasch: *Bauern, Buddhisten und Brahmanen. Das frühe Mittelalter in Gujarat*. Wiesbaden 2001, p. 77 foll., where *satka* is discussed again without superseding Kielhorn.

<sup>4</sup> C. T. M. Kotaia: Boundary Stones: A Study. *J. of the Epigraphical Society of India* 4. 1977. p. 42-55 uses South Indian material from Vijayanagara.

<sup>5</sup> *rājarājamahāmattā vihāraṃ kārāpetvā ... vihārassa lābhasīmā ti nāmalikhitatthambhe nikhanitvā*, Sp 1136, 26-29 “the king or royal official have a monastery constructed .... (ordering): ‘This this is the boundary for gifts to the monastery’ they dig in pillars with the name (of the monastery) written on them.”

<sup>6</sup> J. F. Fleet: Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* III. Calcutta 1888, no. 24, p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> D. Bandini-König: *Die Felsbildstation Hodar*. Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans 3. Mainz 1999, p. 290. The inscriptions from Dardarbatī Das are to appear in volume 10 of the same series.

Again, *srī* is written for *śrī*. The reading of the place-name “the kingdom of ...” is problematic. In spite of the vertical stroke at the right, the rare akṣara *jha* seems to be the only possible choice, because the subscript is too large to interpret the character as *ā*, not very likely in the middle of a word, but cf. inscription 3. The assumed anusvāra dot above *pro-* is most likely only an accidental mark in the stone.

The place-name, if read correctly as *pro(m)jhva* is structurally not all together different from the place name *Kaṃjvā* for *Kaṃjuvā* found in the Saka itinerary<sup>8</sup>. Consequently, *Projhva* could be taken as *Projhuva*, which opens the tempting, though perhaps a bit hazardous possibility to refer to *prūśavā* in the Saka itinerary<sup>9</sup> and to compare this word to *Projhuva*. In Khotanese Saka *-śa-* expresses a voiced palatal sibilant<sup>10</sup>, which is alien to almost all Indo-Aryan languages and, consequently, no corresponding akṣara is found in Brāhmī scripts. Therefore, the akṣara *-jha-* was used to fill this gap, if a voiced sibilant was needed<sup>11</sup>, and *Projh(u)va* is pronounced except for the first vowel perhaps, exactly like *prūśava*. Both then could be equated with *Bruža*<sup>12</sup>.

Furthermore, the personal names of the inscription certainly recall Burushaski names found along the upper Indus. *Sabhaḍikaṇā* might correspond to an epitheton such as *Vurumvuritā(-puruṣa)*. In the following name *Ghikadhāghikena*, only the instrumental suffix is clear.

At the end a Brahmin is mentioned (*vraṃha*). The word *tātha* could be a miswritten *tahā* and one wonders whether *hrārya* is part of the name or an unlikely mistake for *sārdham*. Except for the ending the name (*hrārya*)*makhaka* resists interpretation, even if (*hārya*)*mabika* is read, a rather remote possibility.

“Hail! In the 17<sup>th</sup> year. By the son of the one who enjoys (rules in) the kingdom, the king of the *Projhva* kingdom, the nobleman (*rājika*) *Sabhaḍikaṇā* *Ghikadhāghika* and the Brahmin *Hrāryamakhaka*.”

Unfortunately, the personal name of the king is not mentioned. If the *Laukika* era is assumed the year 17 should be either 741/2 or 841/2 according to the palaeography. The purpose of the inscription executed by or for the son of a king together with a Brahmin is obscure, because neither a gift nor any property is mentioned.

Both inscriptions (nos. 1 and 2) do not point to any connection with Buddhism, which is interesting to note, if they were found in the (greater) Gilgit area, because, as we know from the Saka Itinerary Buddhism was still flourishing in the area during the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> O. v. Hinüber: *Die Palola Śāhis. Ihre Steininschriften, Inschriften auf Bronzen, Handschriftenkolophone und Schutzzauber*. Antiquities of Northern Pakistan. Reports and Studies 5. Mainz 2004, p. 146.

<sup>9</sup> H. W. Bailey: *Saka Documents*. Text Volume. Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum. Part II Inscriptions of the Seleucid and Parthian Period and of Eastern Iran and Central Asia. Vol. V Saka. London 1968 [rev.: R. E. Emmerick, *BSOAS* 32. 1969, p. 401 foll.; H. Humbach, *ZDMG* 121. 1971, p. 384-389 (concordance between Khotanese Texts and Saka Documents); M. J. Dresden, *III* 14. 1972, p. 103-115], p. 70 line 8 of manuscript Ch1,0021 a,b and p. 72 note 8.

<sup>10</sup> R. E. Emmerick: The Consonant Phonemes in Khotanese, in: *Monumentum Georg Morgenstierne I*. Leiden 1981, p. 186-209, § 3(b)4, p. 199.

<sup>11</sup> *Mittelindisch* § 95.

<sup>12</sup> H. W. Bailey: *Khotanese Texts VII*. Cambridge 1985 [rev.: O. v. Hinüber, *OLZ* 82. 1987, column 508 foll.], p. 60 foll. § 14 *Pruśavā*.

<sup>13</sup> King Abhimanyugupta II (958-972) is mentioned in the document as ruler of Kashmir.

Inscription no. 3 (figure 3); measurement unknown:

1. # svastiḥ saṃba (60) 1 1 7 śrāvaṇa
2. va di || vuddhāḥ śrī ḍanimesa
3. ṅaṭerayaṭṭapitā śrī i
4. si kandajena | ghaṭṭibha-o
5. ṭṭikena |

The interpretation of this inscription is very doubtful and its purpose obscure. The shape of the *om*-sign is unusual<sup>14</sup>.

First, the date as read does not make any sense and the reading of the first figure is doubtful. This somewhat resembles the figure "60," what cannot be correct. For, because there are four figures this can only be a figure from "1" to "9." If a symbol signifying "1" to "9" thousand is assumed, this results in an impossible mixture of two systems of noting figures. Moreover, the only era possible would be the Kaliyuga era hardly ever used, and a date Kaliyuga 4117 would bring us to A.D. 1016/17, which is ruled out by the use of a tripartite akṣara -va-. The date should not be later than about A.D. 600 to 650. On the other hand, Kaliyuga 3117 is obviously by far too early.

If the repeated symbol "1" is taken two mean "2," the problem is not solved either. On the other hand, there is no day mentioned in the dark half of the month Śrāvaṇa. Therefore, this might be a very strange notation of "year 62, 7<sup>th</sup> Śrāvaṇa, day in the dark half." Of course, "year 61, 17<sup>th</sup> Śrāvaṇa" is again impossible. The problems surrounding this date cannot be solved at present, in spite of the fact that a Laukika year 62 corresponding to 586/7 would make sense.

The meaning of the word *vuddhā* "Buddhas" is obscure in this position in the inscription. The next complex seems to contain an unusually long name ending in °-pitā "father of Śrī Ḍanimesaṅgaṭerayaṭṭa." The word division is certain because of the following *śrī*. The name resists any interpretation. Because -saṅga- is clearly written without the slightest trace of an -i-, an interpretation as Ḍanimesa-siṅga that is °-siṅgha / °-siṃha with desaspiration frequently occurring in the names ending in °-siṅ(h)a in inscriptions along the upper Indus is ruled out.

The word *isi* most likely corresponds to skt. *ṛṣi*. The names are with the exception of the endings of the instrumental obscure. The last one is written with an initial *o-* in the middle of the word. It seems as if the frequent ending -o(t)(h)a- of names in inscriptions along the upper Indus is mechanically added<sup>15</sup> to a name Ghaṭṭibha instead of correctly forming \*Ghaṭṭibhoṭṭika.

A possible, however, very tentative interpretation is:

"# Hail! Year 62, 7<sup>th</sup> (day of the month) Śrāvaṇa, day of the dark half. Buddhas!

By the Father of Śrī Ḍanimesaṅgaṭerayaṭṭa, the *ṛṣi* Kandaja. By Ghaṭṭibhoṭṭika."

In spite of all these problems and apparent inconsistencies the inscription does not seem to be a forgery.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. note 1.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Palola Śāhis*, as note 2, p. 145.